

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 PM-03 ADP-00 RSR-01 RSC-01 INR-10 /034 W

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R 151006Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2873

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, TS

SUBJ: SIXTH FLEET INSPECTION VISIT AT BIZERTE

REF: TUNIS 3148

1. USDAO TUNIS HAS RECEIVED MESSAGES (NOT REPEATED TO DEPT) FROM CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON AND USDAO VALLETTA PROPOSING VISIT BY SELECTED COMSIXTHFLT STAFF MEMBERS TO STUDY FEASIBILITY/DESIRABILITY GREATER UTILIZATION BIZERTE PORT FACILITIES BY SIXTH FLEET FOR REPAIR AND RESUPPLY PURPOSES. VISIT WOULD BE LOW PROFILE AND WOULD INVOLVE CONTACTS WITH TUNISIAN NAVAL AUTHORITIES AT WORKING LEVEL. LONDON MESSAGE NOTES THAT CURRENT U.S. NAVY INTEREST IN BIZERTE COMES FROM JCS THROUGH CNO AND IS GENERATED BY TUNIS 3148 REPORTING PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S ENCOURAGEMENT (MENTIONED BRIEFLY DURING LUNCHEON FOR FORMER AMBASSADOR RUSSELL) OF USE BY SIXTH FLEET OF THESE PORT FACILITIES.

2. EMBASSY SHARES DEPT'S VIEW, AS REFLECTED IN RECENT INFORMAL COMMUNICATIONS, THAT GOT AND PARTICULARLY BOURGUIBA SHOULD NOT RPT NOT BE ENCOURAGED TO EXPECT INCREASED SIXTH FLEET ACTIVITIES IN TUNISIA APART FROM SCHEDULED SHIP VISITS. WE HAVE DELIBERATELY AVOIDED FOLLOWING UP TO FIND OUT WHAT BOURGUIBA MAY HAVE SPECIFI-
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CALLY IN MIND, AS THIS MIGHT STIMULATE MORE FORMAL GOT

DEMARCHE. FOR ITS PART, EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT AN INFORMAL VISIT BY SIXTH FLEET STAFF MEMBERS AT THIS TIME WOULD ADD MUCH TO OUR EXISTING KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIZERTE PORT, INCLUDING NAVAL FACILITIES. MOREOVER, WE WOULD BE CONCERNED THAT SUCH A VISIT MIGHT WHET THE APPETITES OF THE GOT AND PROMPT IT TO MAKE FURTHER DEMANDS OF USG FOR NAVAL ASSISTANCE WHICH MIGHT BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO MEET. THUS, EMBASSY BELIEVES IT WOULD BE BEST TO TURN DOWN THIS NAVY REQUEST.

3. BEFORE REPLYING TO CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON AND USDAO VALLETTA, HOWEVER, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT CON-

CURRENCE IN EMBASSY POSITION.

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